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WESTERN EUROPE – CANADA – INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



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C O N T E N T S



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Portuguese Military Study Role of Parties

The Portuguese Armed Forces Movement's 240-man general assembly met yesterday to consider proposals that would preclude any meaningful role for political parties by establishing "direct links between the military and the people."

One report presented to the assembly reportedly discounts the results of the constituent assembly elections and warns the military that the elections have increased dissension among political parties and jeopardized the "alliance of the people and the Armed Forces Movement." The document suggests that the ties can be renewed by linking the Movement with "popular structures," such as residents' and workers' committees.

According to the press, the report focuses much of its criticism on the Socialist Party, which is blamed for creating divisions in the working class. Socialist Party leaders Soares and Zenha unexpectedly drove to the assembly meeting last night and demanded to speak with members of the Revolutionary Council.

Attacks on the elections and the victorious Socialists may also be directed at moderates in the Movement, especially President Costa Gomes, who has been outspoken in his praise of the elections and has argued that its results will have an impact on the government.

Continuing tensions between the Socialists and the Communists may help convince Movement officers to vote against the continued role of political parties. Communist printers yesterday seized control

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3 | of a Socialist newspaper, one of only two remaining newspapers not under Communist or government control. The incident is threatening to lead to a violent confrontation by members of the two parties, as thousands of Socialists gathered outside to try to regain control of the paper but were barred by armed paratroopers.

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3 | It is not certain whether the printers were acting on their own or with the approval of the Communist Party. Party leader Cunhal appears concerned, at least on the surface, that continuing friction between the two parties could have serious repercussions. In a speech published yesterday, he expressed the fear that the military will ultimately condemn all political parties and said that this could only lead to a split between the military and the people. Cunhal appears convinced that his party would receive no special treatment if political parties were to be abolished.

1, 2 | The Communists have also expressed concern over the action of extreme leftists of the Reorganizing Movement of the Proletariat Party who, in concert with a leftist army regiment, claimed last weekend to have uncovered a "vast net of fascist conspirators" planning a "bloody armed repression." The artillery regiment, the object of attack in the March 11 abortive coup, announced it had arrested at least 20 of the "conspirators" and was holding them in their barracks.

1, 2 | A Communist editorial in a daily government-controlled newspaper denounced the "absurd behavior" of the Reorganizing Movement in trying to prevent the transfer of the prisoners from the barracks to a military prison. It also questioned who was in control in Portugal and asked how long the revolution-ary process can withstand unrest.

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The struggle for leadership in the Armed Forces Movement and increasing clashes between political groups have moved Portugal further toward a breakdown in order.

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Quebec Government Confident in Labor Showdown

1-3-4 | Premier Robert Bourassa remains confident that his government will win its showdown with the Quebec Federation of Labor. Labor leaders have called for a one-day "study session" by 300,000 Federation members tomorrow, but the provincial government believes that the strike will be spotty and will alienate the general public.

3-4 | Government confidence was heightened when the Federation shifted the focus of its strike from proposed government legislation dealing with alleged corruption in Quebec's construction unions, to government proposals to end the 16-month-old strike at the American owned Pratt-Whitney aircraft engine plant. Union leaders apparently sensed they were bucking public opinion which supports legislation providing for government trusteeship over the construction unions and prohibiting persons with serious criminal records from holding union office. The provincial National Assembly is expected to approve both bills today.

1-3-4 | Premier Bourassa has now toughened his position, charging that union "goon squads" were preventing workers from returning to their jobs. He maintains that his government's objective "is to give workers the right to work if they want to." Quebec Justice Minister Choquette moved to implement this objective by ordering police to protect construction workers at job sites. As for the violence-prone Pratt-Whitney strike, Bourassa said his government had done all it could to settle what is essentially a private matter.

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Prime Minister Trudeau has indicated that he fully supports the Premier and agrees with Bourassa's earlier statement that maintenance of social order is more important than ensuring that construction work continues on the Olympic facilities. Trudeau added that he does not anticipate federal intervention to ensure that the Olympic Games are held.

Meanwhile, a Canadian delegation is traveling to Switzerland to reassure nervous officials of the International Olympic Committee that the Olympic facilities in Montreal will be completed by opening day on July 17, 1976. Committee members are concerned that construction delays, cost overruns, and material shortages might force a last-minute change of location. There have not yet been any formal discussions, however, about finding an alternative site.

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